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SECURITY INFORMATION

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ONI CONTRIBUTION TO NIE-96 --

"Thailand's Ability to Withstand Communist Pressures or Attacks"

(The following is submitted to supplement and modify Section 82 of the NIS on Thailand)

ONI DECLASSIFICATION/RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS ON FILE

I.B.1.b. What is the current strength, disposition, and combat effectiveness of Thailand's Navy?

The current strength of the Royal Thai Navy is as follows: 1 BM, 2 BMR, 1 ODD, 7 DC, 2 PG/OPG, 3 PGM, 2 PF, 1 PCE, 7 PC, 3 PT, 2 CMC, 1 AM, 3 AMS, 1 IST, 2 LSM, 2 LSIL, 8 LCU, 2 AG, 6 APC, and several smaller auxiliary vessels. These are a conglomeration of vessels built in Italy, UK, Japan and the U.S. during the years just prior to and since World War II. All are based at Bangkok with the exception of 2 PF in Korea, which makes them extremely vulnerable in the case of unannounced enemy attack. Of the vessels carried on the Navy list, only nineteen can be considered as suitable for ASW, escort or mine warfare missions in the Gulf of Siam. These effective vessels are as follows: 2 PF (ex-U.S. TACOMA Class Frigates--now in Korea); 1 PCE (ex-Br. FLOWER Class Corvette); 7 PC (ex-U.S. 173' Class); 3 PGM (Japanese built Torpedo boats); 2 CMC; 1 AM (ex-Br. ALGERINE Class, now enroute to Spithead), and 3 AMS (ex-U.S. WW II YMS).

I.B.4 What trends in the above strengths and weaknesses may be expected in the foreseeable future?

Reports indicate that some limited improvement in the Thai Navy may be expected in the foreseeable future. The Thai Government has evidenced more confidence in the Navy by permitting increases in the budget and in personnel strength, particularly noted by the reconstitution of a marine corps of six battalions. Recently the Thai Navy, as a result of MAAG prodding, conducted training exercises at sea which demonstrated some improvement in maneuvers, gunnery, and seamanship. Furthermore, by rotation of the crews aboard the two

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frigates serving with the UN forces in Korean waters, a nucleus of trained personnel will continue to be developed under proper guidance and leadership. Thai naval officers are gradually replacing British and Japanese concepts with those of the U.S. Navy.

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In spite of such limited improvement, the Thai Navy will continue

[redacted] lack of funds, inefficient use of available funds, inadequate conscript and training programs, and obsolete vessels almost beyond repair. Furthermore, the Navy leaders will continue to be so closely associated with national politics that the Navy will continue to suffer from the vicissitudes of government.

II.C.2.a. In what manner would the above Thai capabilities to withstand external and internal Communist pressures or attacks be affected by Western assistance to Thailand? A major increase in Western aid, including guarantees of Thailand's security?

The Thai Navy is not an effective force capable of carrying out its prescribed mission of defending the Thai coast. This situation would not be greatly improved by a major increase in Western aid unless an extensive Western training program were established to provide the necessary incentives and leadership.

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A U.S. guarantee of Thailand's security, however, would constitute a boost to Thai Navy morale.

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